



South
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HOUSING
AFFORDABILITY
STRATEGY

Revised Draft
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Allison Silberberg
Vice Mayor Justin Wilson
Councilman Willie F. Bailey Sr.
Councilman John T. Chapman
Councilman Timothy B. Lovain
Councilwoman Redella S. “Del” Pepper
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Stephen Koenig
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Maria Wasowski

CITY MANAGER’S OFFICE

Mark Jinks, City Manager
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager

CITY ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

Joanna Anderson, Deputy City Attorney
Dori Martin, Assistant City Attorney

ALEXANDRIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Stephanie Landrum, President & CEO
Christina Mindrup, Vice President of Commercial Real Estate

OFFICE OF HOUSING

Helen McIlvaine, Director
Eric Keeler, Deputy Director
Melodie Seau, Division Chief
Vicente Espinoza, Housing Program Specialist
Tamara Jovovic, Housing Planner
Lucinda Metcalf, Asset Manager
Caridad Palerm, Housing Analyst

PLANNING AND ZONING

Karl Moritz, Director
Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director
Thomas Canfield, City Architect
Carrie Beach, Division Chief
Nathan Imm, Principal Planner
Catherine Miliaras, Principal Planner
Chrishaun Smith, Acting Zoning Manager
Raymond Atkinson, Urban Planner (former)
Jose C. Ayala, Urban Planner
Katherine Carraway, Urban Planner
William Cook, Urban Planner
Heba ElGawish, Urban Planner
Ashley Labadie, Urban Planner
Sierra Latham, Urban Planner
Richard Lawrence, Urban Planner

RECREATION, PARKS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Jack Browand, Division Chief
Dana Wedeles, Principal Planner
Lucresha Murphy, PARKnership Manager

TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

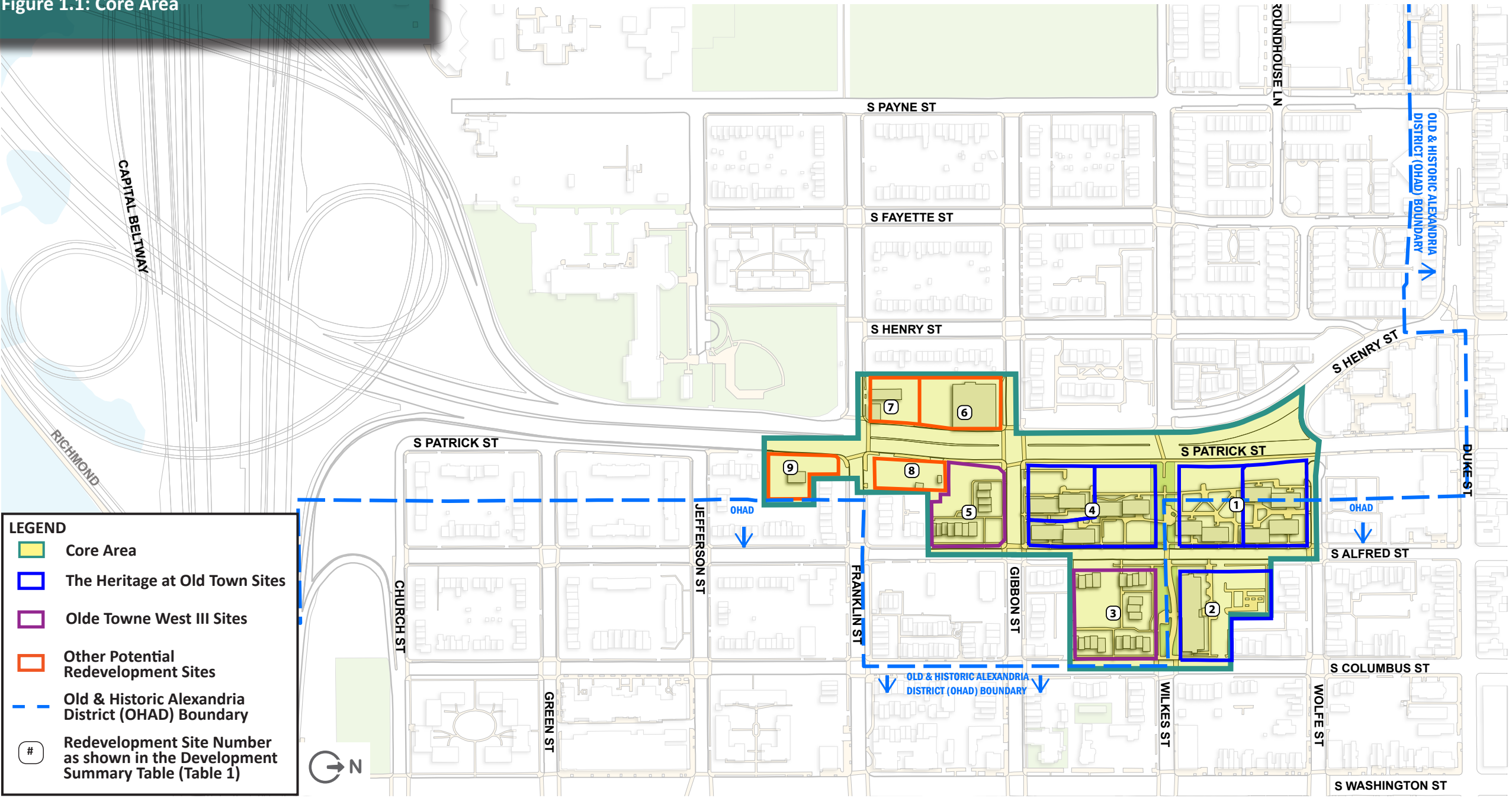
Yon Lambert, Director
Hillary Orr, Deputy Director
Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief
Erin Bevis-Carver, Civil Engineer IV
Melanie Mason, Watershed Management Planner
Ramiro Rios, Principal Transportation Planner



The Route 1 South Housing Affordability Strategy (Strategy) establishes a framework to guide the preservation of housing diversity along Route 1 South within the Southwest Quadrant Small Area. The Strategy represents a singular opportunity for the City to work proactively with the community, property owners, and residents who may be impacted, to address a near-term challenge carrying tremendous human and economic costs—the potential loss of affordability of 215 homes at The Heritage at Old Town and Olde Towne West III. Inclusive planning and implementation is essential to providing a Strategy that is financially sustainable, responsive to the needs of residents, and respectful of the neighborhood.

This Strategy is about people—about the current and future residents of The Heritage at Old Town and Olde Towne West III, their neighbors, and the community they all call home. Through strategic redevelopment and measured incentives, it will help enable many long-time Alexandrians to remain in their neighborhood, ensure displaced residents are cared for during temporary relocation, and efficiently safeguard housing affordability through the retention of valuable federal rental subsidy contracts. Importantly, this Strategy balances the need for redevelopment with responsible design and height recommendations to ensure future redevelopment is not only compatible with the existing neighborhood, but also enhances it. It identifies opportunities to improve neighborhood connectivity and safety, to create inviting gathering places that are accessible to all, and to re-envision Route 1 South as a welcoming gateway to the city.

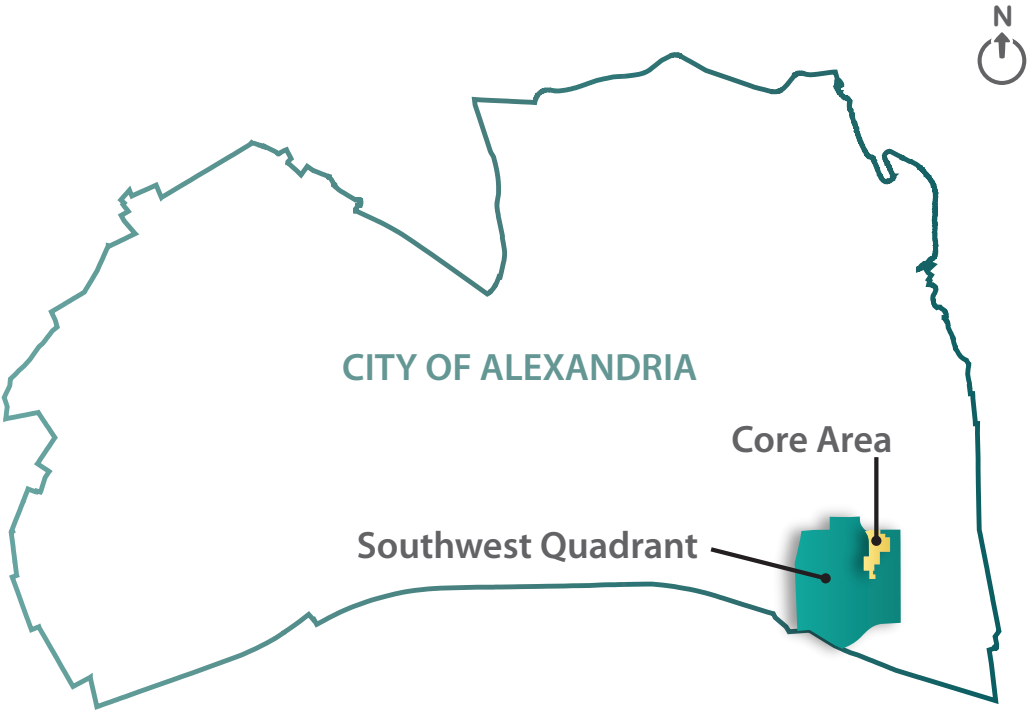
Figure 1.1: Core Area



WHY PLAN NOW

There are currently 215 committed affordable units within The Heritage at Old Town and Olde Towne West III that serve low-to moderate-income Alexandrians, including seniors and others on fixed incomes, through federal housing assistance contracts that have ensured the affordability of the units for over three decades. The rental subsidy contracts for these affordable units are subject to voluntary annual renewals at The Heritage at Old Town and are scheduled to end in late 2019 or early 2020 at Olde Towne West III.

Both property owners have existing zoning and development rights that would allow them to redevelop the properties as townhouses and would have no legal obligation to continue the rental subsidy contracts after granting adequate advance notification. Without proactive planning, incentives and implementation, the affordability of the 215 units will be permanently lost if their property owners choose to redevelop and/or opt out of the contracts. This will cause the displacement of the existing 215 households that live in the subsidized units, as well as exacerbate the city’s affordable housing shortage, reduce its inventory of family-sized units, and shrink its number of deeply-affordable units.



WHAT’S THIS ALL ABOUT?

This Strategy is primarily focused on a core area (Figure 1.1) within the Southwest Quadrant Small Area Plan (SAP) that includes 215 units of committed affordable housing, as well as commercial properties on Route 1 south of Gibbon Street. The Strategy will be an overlay to the Southwest Quadrant SAP and will only amend those portions of the SAP that are directly addressed in the Strategy (to the extent redevelopment of those parcels occurs). The Strategy provides a 15-year framework that will be implemented in phases. The recommendations were informed by a community engagement process that included a design charrette, multiple community meetings, property owner discussions, targeted outreach to residents, work sessions, pop-ups, open houses, and on-line participation. The community will continue to have opportunities to provide feedback as future redevelopment and the public improvements recommended by this Strategy are brought forward for review. (Additional information about the community engagement process can be found in Appendix A.1).

STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Preserve the long-term affordability of 215 committed affordable units at The Heritage at Old Town and Olde Towne West III by building partnerships, leveraging public and private resources, and enabling responsible and strategic increases in density and height as outlined within this Strategy;
- Ensure the properties are redeveloped into successful and financially sustainable communities serving a broad range of incomes;
- Retain the existing federal rental subsidy contracts that provide deep levels of affordability;
- Ensure that all eligible residents who wish to return to the neighborhood have the opportunity to do so, and are offered support during their interim and/or permanent relocations;
- Focus taller building height generally on Route 1 and apply a variety of building heights to achieve compatibility with the existing neighborhood;
- Ensure that new development contributes to the neighborhood through enhanced streetscapes, public spaces, and high-quality building design;
- Provide significant improvements to the streetscape on Route 1 and neighborhood streets;
- Retain and enhance walkable access to neighborhood-serving retail/commercial, public facilities, and other neighborhood amenities;
- Provide building and open space elements at the intersection of Franklin Street and Route 1 to create a gateway entrance to the city;
- Provide improvements to the Wilkes Street public park for use by neighbors of all ages and abilities as part of the redevelopment process;
- Calm vehicle traffic and increase safety and accessibility for people walking, biking, or otherwise moving on or across Route 1, through streetscape, pedestrian and bike improvements, and buildings that define the street;
- Ensure that future development provides stormwater and sanitary sewer infrastructure that improves each site's environmental sustainability;
- Ensure that future school capacity takes into account potential new student generation resulting from development; and
- Establish short, mid and long-term action items as part of the implementation of the Strategy.

CONSISTENCY WITH CITY PLANS

Many of the City's Plans and policies are echoed in the objectives and guiding principles in this Strategy. The City's Strategic Plan aspires to an Alexandria that is a "caring, kind, compassionate, fair, just and equitable city that supports an affordable and livable community for all."¹ This Strategy is consistent with these objectives for an inclusive City, as well as for vibrant and distinctive neighborhoods that are safe for all residents and visitors. The Strategy provides a framework to create and maintain deeply subsidized committed affordable units and use land use tools to incentivize the preservation of affordable and accessible units. Further, the Strategy aligns with the Housing Master Plan by preserving housing opportunities for Alexandrians at different incomes, abilities, and stages of life, with the City's recently adopted Vision Zero Action Plan to create safe streets for all, and with the Environmental Action Plan related to site and building design, streetscaping, and improved options for walking and biking.

Note: Figures and percentages included in the Strategy are expressed in 2018 dollars/percentages unless otherwise specified.

1 City of Alexandria, Strategic Plan, 2017-2022